



Technocracy is not socialism. It is fascism.

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Immutable Proof Why Marxists Hate Technocracy – Part I



POSTED BY: PAUL TEMPLE VIA MARXISTS.ORG MAY 31, 2024

This official 1944 article from *The New Internationalist*, the "Monthly Organ of Revolutionary Marxism," should be the end of the discussion that Technocracy is Marxism dressed in other clothes or vice versa. They have hated each other from the beginning because of irreconcilable ideological differences. All who blame Marxism for the state of the world are clueless and blind. Part II drops tomorrow. This will cause a mental disconnect for a lot of people, as it should. It will force them to rethink everything from the ground up.

We need to give up the narrative that Marxists are our arch-enemies who will bury us in the end and focus on the real enemy – Technocracy.

The clear and present danger is Technocracy, not Marxism or its derivatives, Communism or Socialism.

Part II will drop tomorrow. Get ready. - TN Editor

Technocracy: A Totalitarian Fantasy

Myths and Realities About a "New Order"

(March 1944)

From *New Internationalist*, Vol. X No. 3, March 1944, pp. 73–78.

Transcribed & marked up by Einde O'Callaghan for the [Marxists' Internet Archive](#).

Along in 1932 and the beginning of 1933, at the bottom of the "Great Depression," the new word "technocracy" hit public attention with the same mass impact as apple-selling, depression jokes, bankers gravitating downward from upper stories, and breadlines. The little furor over the new and high sounding words which it spewed forth to a goggling group of newspaper readers lasted only a little longer than the aforesaid degravitating course of the bankers. It choked off in 1933 when the New Deal alphabet began to steal the limelight from the technocratic spawn of "ergs," "extraneous energy," "social thermodynamics," etc. And not much more was heard of it for ten years.

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In 1942 Howard Scott and his brainchild came forth with another bid for popular attention. It was by now "Technocracy, Inc." and it had had its face lifted. From a group of statistically minded research men with a new vocabulary, it had become a quite mysteriously well-heeled organization which could shoot \$100,000 on a series of newspaper ads; commanded fleets of gray cars; sported uniforms and salutes – and a new refurbished Howard Scott who posed, no longer as "merely" a theoretical genius, but as a Leader and a Man of Destiny. Branch organizations had sprouted in different sections of the country, quite the largest being (as might be expected) in the Los Angeles area of Southern California. From dealing mainly in ergs, calories, joules and kilowatt-hours, it was now talking in terms of an immediate social program on the conduct of the war, governmental organization, international politics, race relations, etc. And the mark of the beast on its new body of ideas could be detected without an electronic microscope: a new fascist hat was in the ring.

But before entering on a detailed description of this late portentous change in the character of the technocrats' movement, it is well first to analyze technocracy itself, that is, its economic and social theory.

The most immediate reason for making this analysis is the existence of two quite common myths about technocracy, the first of which is carefully fostered by the technocrats themselves:

That technocracy has made certain valuable and *new* contributions toward an understanding of modern society;

That technocracy has "taken over" many socialist ideas, and that in fact a good part of its ideology is socialism in an "Americanized" form.

Both of these are – myths, nothing more.

Where Technocracy Started

The technocrats trace their ancestry back to 1919, which is both the date of the publication by Thorstein Veblen of his **Engineers and the Price System**, and the formation by a small group of economists and technicians of the "Technical Alliance," together with the then unknown Howard Scott. Scott claims that he developed his ideas independently of Veblen, which may well be true. At least – although there are many similarities between Veblen's work and Scott's theories, especially verbal similarities – Scott's subsequent development of those ideas represents only their crude vulgarization and degeneration into nonsense, and should not be held against the subtler intellect and more rational thinking of the author of **The Theory of the Leisure Class**.

The 1919 group included some people of repute: among them, Wesley Mitchell, Stuart Chase, Charles Steinmetz, Leon Henderson and Bassett Jones, attracted on the basis of Veblen's germinal ideas, and thinking of themselves as the "engineers" to whom Veblen had directed his challenge to save society from the "price system." It never did anything of note and very soon disappeared with the return of "normalcy."

At the beginning of the 1930s, with capitalist economy pounding on the rocks and all orthodox economic thinking shipwrecked, some of the lesser lights of the 1919 group again teamed up with Scott, who had meantime christened his cerebrations "technocracy," for the purpose of making a statistical study of the effect of technological advance on the economic system. This was a laudable academic endeavor, and they managed to wangle the wherewithal to do so from Columbia University and the American Institute of Architects. (When Scott hit the headline jackpot with his ideas in 1932, Columbia made haste to disclaim all connection, and quite a number of Scott's research co-workers pulled out in a hurry, denying that his hair-brained theories had any necessary connection with the research work the group had been doing.)

Technocratic literature today is filled with vague references to this research body (its adventitious relation with Columbia is carefully mentioned to inflate its academic standing), together with the claims that it produced "startling" and brand-new light on the economy, and that the social theories of technocracy flowed from the graphs and charts there developed with the inevitability of a mathematical equation. The following is a sample:

In their researches the scientists [Scott and his co-workers are meant] discovered a new method of social operation ... [From their findings] come concrete indications of the end of the price system on the North American continent. The evidence is positive and complete." (**Technocracy in Plain Terms**, page 8)

It is no wonder, of course, that all such references are made in general (but sweeping) terms – the common denominator of most of technocracy's popular propaganda. Vague references to science, scientists, mathematics and research are impressive, and it is a common prejudice that, a man who can get up a chart showing the production of pig iron from 1880 to 1930 is thereby also automatically qualified to speak on the fate of humanity.

On what was this actual research with which technocracy started?

Technocracy's Graphs and Charts

In point of fact, it dealt with two things:

America's technical capacity to produce abundant wealth, and the evolution of this capacity.

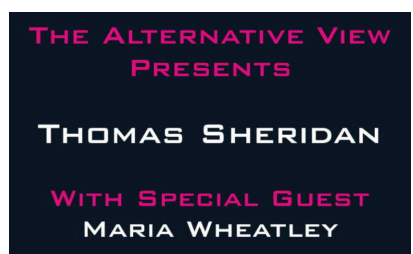
The development of labor-saving automatic machinery, displacing human labor.

That research into these well known trends and the development of statistical charts and figures on them are useful, goes without saying. If Scott had ended there he would have performed the same service that is being done every month of the year by similar academic groups. As a matter of fact, the most complete work on the first item has been done by the Brookings Institute, a thoroughly pro-capitalist institution.

This is the "new" and "startling" body of facts on which the technocrats base their puff that "scientific research" "mathematically" proves the social *theories* of technocracy! To go no further, it is as if one were to painstakingly develop a detailed chart showing the war casualties on the battle fronts – and then point to it as "scientific" and conclusive proof of the *theory* that modern wars are fought to kill off the surplus population!

Two other remarks on the technocrats' use of statistics and figures on the advance of technology:

Their literature shows the childish tendency to talk as if it was not until Howard Scott came along that the discovery was made that machines have been used more and more to displace human labor and that this has had a



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tremendous impact on economy. Some of their guileless readers would undoubtedly be surprised to learn that this has been stock material in economic discussions since Adam Smith's **Wealth of Nations** in the 1770s.

Especially during the technocratic flurry of 1932–33, a large number of spectacular examples of technological displacement which were heralded forth by Scott were shown up as loose, inaccurate and exaggerated. Since this does not affect the heart of the matter – the economic tendency itself being plain enough – it is not really worthwhile to go into this in any detail.

It was, however, sufficiently demonstrated that Scott was writing more in the style of advertising copy than scientific soberness. He was, for instance, not loath to point to the example of an automatic road-building machine which could lay eight miles of surfaced road a day with only two workers on it – without mentioning the fact that to feed such a machine some thirty-five trucks had to be in constant attendance, while a large gang of hand laborers had constantly to be employed constructing feeder lanes. Or to refer to plants which were only in the idea stage as if they were in actual operation. This is relevant only to the fact that all technocratic literature insists upon the micrometric accuracy of every subordinate clause written in it.

At any rate, Scott pulled together a lot of statistics. But statistics have to be interpreted – by means of analysis, hypothesis, correlation with other facts. Here Scott doffs the garb of research expert and dons the mantle of the quack.

Presto! The Worker Vanishes!

Well, now, technological improvement has been displacing human labor. What are the conclusions from this fact?

The well known result is the development of "technological unemployment" – that is, the creation of a chronically unemployed reserve of workers, due to the invention of labor-saving machinery. There are still some people who repeat the hoary myth that every new machine creates as many jobs as it displaces, but the technocrats do not go in for this brand of nonsense. They have their own.

Where the economic analyst notes the development of this type of chronic *unemployment*, Scott records nothing less than ... the abolition of human labor! One of the fundamental tenets of technocracy is that *labor has become non-essential to society*.

"Technology has swept away the human worker," proclaimed Scott in **Harper's Magazine** (January 1933). Or another sample: in his **Introduction to Technocracy**, he writes of the last one hundred and fifty years:

"The number of man-hours of human effort required per unit output was greatest one hundred years ago, and declined steadily ever since, *approaching the limit of zero in all our best practices*." (All emphasis in quotations is mine unless otherwise noted.)

It is by fantastic statements such as these that our technocratic graph-and-chart experts precede their conclusion that labor is non-essential to industry. It would do no particular good to call their attention to the mass-production industries, assuredly not among our worst industrial practices, where the human worker is far from "swept away" and non-essential! One may suspect that their eyes are fixed so firmly on the technological horizon that they cannot see the real today; but nevertheless Scott wrote "*has swept away*," not "*will sweep away*."

To be sure, the day may come when the necessity for human labor approaches zero, but at the moment this is a reality only in the science-fiction magazine's robot stories and in the inflated statistical puffs of technocratic exaggerations. As we shall see, it is characteristic that in technocratic literature it is assumed for practical purposes this blessed state already exists.

With the consistency of lunacy, the technocrats follow through with the consequences of this "discovery." Labor is non-essential to industry and society? It is today a negligible quantity; it plays no social role; it is completely to be ignored in an understanding of the world today, and in point of fact technocratic literature does so ignore it; the labor *movement* is merely an anachronism, due to be wiped out entirely in a few years by the research laboratories; and one's attitude toward it can well be the same as toward the Australian platypus.

(Note that it requires no graphs to prove that what is really non-essential in industry today, especially technologically, is the *capitalist* absentee owner, but the technocrats never mention this; they direct attention to the "non-essential" *worker*!)

From Automatic Machines to Automatic Collapse

In 1933, Stuart Chase – who has gone chasing after more messiahs in the field of sociology than Mme. Besant in the field of religion – was in a technocratic mood; and in his very sympathetic pamphlet on technocracy he carried Scott's thesis forward:

The automatic process continually displaces the manual worker. He secures a job, if he is lucky, in one of the "service" trades, usually a white collar trade. He leaves, or he is thrown out of, the classic proletariat. What becomes of the class struggle theory? Where are the toiling masses, without a worker in the plant? Photo-electric cells can readily identify the color red, but they are difficult to organize. Service trade workers are even more difficult. *The official labor movement, it is significant to note, has not progressed in the new mass production industries*, and in the next phase, the automatic industry, there will be nobody to organize. When this development proceeds to a certain point, *which we may or may not yet have reached* [Chase is actually uncertain whether or not there are any workers left to organize! – P.T.], the whole Marxian thesis stands in need of substantial revision. Marx wrote in a time of far lower energy magnitudes. One suspects he would be the first to recognize the changed situation today. (**Technocracy – An Interpretation**, page 27)

Poor Karl Marx, to be so insidiously flattered! But unfortunately for the "significant" fact which Chase pointed to in 1933, the mass production were not only organized, but, as the Marxists expected, went to the vanguard of the labor movement. And the class struggle, whose death was thus heralded forth by our technocrat in imitation of hordes of similarly unlucky forerunners, broke out with unprecedented intensity in the sit-down strikes. And Karl Marx did not have to make a 180-degree turn in his grave.



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But still – will not industry, given continued technical development, sooner or later really arrive at the “automatic” stage, with the attendant social consequences indicated by Chase?

Certainly, *but not until the present economic system is abolished*. For the capitalist system, which does nothing except for a profit, in modern days finds it unprofitable to introduce new devices which would have the effect of increasing the more abundant flow of socially useful wealth. As an economy based on scarcity, it tends to suppress the technological improvement which would only have the effect of piling up more goods on a market which it does not provide with the purchasing power to absorb them. The technocrats themselves refer to this phenomenon but without the faintest glimmering of its economic meaning.

For the technocrats do not argue that the present system must be abolished *in order* to permit the continued development of technology. They stand the proposition on its head. Their basic thought is that it is precisely the *unstoppable* and *automatically* continuing development of technology which is the force which will *by and of itself* overthrow the present system.

Chase summarizes this prognosis concisely:

The technical arts cannot be halted. As they march they are exploding unemployment, money values and vested interests. The price system cannot withstand an indefinite series of such explosions without collapse. (*Ibidem*, page 28)

This is a faithful rendering of Scott's views: technological improvement will itself bring about the automatic collapse of the present system, which will fall of its own weight. The technocrats conceive their job to be merely to sit back and wait for this to happen.

The Inevitability of Physics

This mechanical-minded fatalism, gone hog-wild, of the technocrats flows from a basic characteristic of their theories, without which their fantasies cannot be understood and which permeates their thinking on every point. It is the assumption that society, with all the problems peculiar to it, obeys the same laws as an automobile engine – and *no others*.

At this point the unprepared reader will not interpret this statement with the complete literalness which the technocrats intend by it. It is not a metaphor or an analogy that they are making, or merely an attempt at an illuminating comparison.

“All social activity must obey the laws of physics,” stated Scott flatly and unqualifiedly. And by this he means, neither more nor less, that *all one needs to understand what is going on in society is a knowledge of the contents of a good college physics text-book*. (It is, of course, a coincidence that these contents exhaust his own qualifications to pose as a social scientist.) The pamphlet, **Technocracy in Plain Terms** (page 7), repeats this guiding dictum; but to spare further quotations one need only glance at the table of contents of the very official and definitive **Technocracy Study Course**, a book of a couple of hundred pages.

The first one hundred and twenty pages of this complete **Study Course** is entirely devoted to nothing more than subjects such as: molecules, atoms, potential and kinetic energy, laws of thermodynamics, efficiency of engines, calories, solar radiation, biological equilibrium of plants and animals, early discovery of metals, production of pig iron, Newton's three laws of motion, the nature of ferro-alloys, etc.

For Scott this half-baked condensation of physical science is the total content of *social* science also. The only social motive factor is technological invention. There is nothing else. All economics and sociology, economic analysis and social ideas are otherwise meaningless and a waste of a scientist's time.

La Mettrie was the eighteenth century author of **Man, a Machine**, who presented the mechanical-materialist notion that man is nothing but a self-propelled engine, operated by the laws of physics and chemistry alone, ignoring the qualitative difference between a living organism and dead matter. La Mettrie had at least the historical excuse of writing in the childhood of modern science. Scott extends this early philosopher's crude notions to apply even to the again qualitatively different *social* organism – and presents this cast-off relic of philosophy as an “ultra-modern” discovery. As usual, the technocrats, who reject all theory as such with scorn, are not thereby prevented from filling its place with the very crudest theories of all. They boast that they have “applied” science to sociology. This is patently not so. They *substitute physical science for sociology*, rather than apply the scientific *method* in order to arrive at a real science of society.

The Blessings of Ignorance

I have said that this mechanistic theory is the basis of all their views, and we shall see this further as we review what they have to say. But two examples may be brought in at this point.

One is Scott's account of the history of the development of society in the last six or seven thousand years, during which man has passed through the social stages of the primitive tribal commune, the chattel-slave system from ancient Egypt to Rome, the feudalism of the Middle Ages, and early and modern capitalism.

For Scott, this history of society is a very simple one. For six or seven thousand years nothing happened of social importance; then, in the middle of the eighteenth century, the steam engine was invented, and social change began. That is all.

Since all human activity is determined, quantitatively, by the amount of energy consumed, we can truly say that *all history, unfit recently, has not witnessed an appreciable social change*, in the sense herein defined ...

He [the technocrat] speaks of the period from the dawn of history to the middle of the eighteenth century as *six thousand static years*. (**Intro. Auction to Technocracy**, see pages 11–20)

The sub-title, *The First Social Change in History*, on page 2 of this pamphlet, refers also the middle of the eighteenth century.



Why did it “suddenly” happen that in the middle of the eighteenth century the steam engine got itself invented and machine production became dominant? Why didn’t the discovery of the principle of the steam engine by Hero in ancient Greece lead to a machine economy way back then? etc.

These questions do not exist for Scott. It just happened, that’s all. Besides, an answer cannot be gotten out of a statistical chart of the production of pig iron, or deduced from either the first or second law of thermodynamics. *Why* history happens, and *why* society changes is therefore an insoluble mystery, since the technocrat on principle refuses to consider that the re-discovery of the steam engine principle could have the social effect it did only because of the social and economic changes which had already taken place by that time and provided the new context for it. One will hardly expect them to understand why the history of *today* is happening.

Fascism, for example. There has been more than one explanation advanced for the rise of fascism, but never one like Howard Scott’s.

The difference between fascism and America’s way of life is not merely a difference in ideology: It is a basic difference in the method of social operations. *In all fascist countries, including Germany, physical wealth is produced chiefly by human toil and hand tools*, while in America physical wealth is produced chiefly by technological processes using extraneous energy. (**Total Conscriptio – Your Questions Answered**, page 20)

This – “human toil and hand tools” – is given as the dominant content of the most highly developed industrial economy outside of the United States! One might call Scott merely an ignoramus were it not for the fact that technocrats are brought up to look upon this charlatan as the mastermind of the ages. This is the length the technocrats go in attempting to interpret social phenomena starkly in terms of technology.

How Scott Abolishes Economics

This mind-set of the technocrats once understood, their reaction to the basic problems of economics will seem less fantastic, if not less stupid.

For the long and short of the technocratic approach to economics is ... that there is no such animal. There is no question of what the technocrats counterpose to present-day economic theory. They have no counterposed theory. They believe in principle in not having any. All their argumentation in this field is simply devoted to demonstrating that economic theory as such is nonsense. (Remember ... the laws of physics.)

Most, if not all, of their critics have not understood that this is the case. The technocrats themselves are perfectly clear in presenting this point of view.

Writing – sweepingly as usual in the name of the “scientists and technologists” – Scott blankly says that they “do not understand” why investigators into the nature of economic society “should forever busy themselves *with the facts of ownership and pecuniary values*.”

They do not understand the current accounts of what has happened [the depression] or the proposals as to what should be done about it. *For the entire, range of facts and events dealt, with lies completely outside the range of facts and events with which they are concerned in their own accounts.* (**Introduction**, page 9)

This sounds like an indictment of the very real social ignorance and limited horizon of technical men. But Scott is not bemoaning it; he identifies himself with the know-nothings:

To these men of matter-of-fact and of quantitative measurements ... the current proposals looking toward a return to better times are utterly beside the point.

Scott demonstrates the irrelevance of economics by tackling, as is proper, the basic problem of economics: the concept of the *value* of a commodity; This is what he has to say about it, in his vaunted role of “scientist and technologist”:

The technologist examines our so-called standard of measurement, the monetary unit – the dollar. He notes that it is variable. Why anybody should attempt, on this earth, to use a variable as a measuring rod is so utterly absurd that he dismisses any serious consideration of its use in his study of what should be done.

He also considers “price” and “value” and the fine-spun theories of philosophers and economists who have attempted to surround these terms with the semblance of meaning. These terms, like the monetary unit, may have had meaning to men in the past but they mean nothing whatsoever to the modern technologist. The standard of measurement is not relevant to the thing measured and the measuring rod and the things measured, as if they were stable, are all variables ... It is, of course, quite possible to rationalize this in terms of the functions of the price system; but after it has been rationalized it still remains to the technologist nothing more nor less than an item of nonsense. He simply refuses to think of that item of our technological equipment as waving up and down like that. It doesn’t. (**Introduction**, pages 22–23)

“All this,” he complains, “constitutes a situation which is obviously alien to the technologist’s world of thought, theory and action.”

And it is therefore damned. Anything, you see, which is outside of Scott’s “range of facts and events” or his “world of thought” is an unreal shadow. This is a proposition which is so obvious – to Scott – that he “simply refuses to think” any more about it. It is a fact, at any rate, that he says no more about it.

A Little Knowledge ...

Since Scott simply refuses to think about it, one can understand why he never bothered to find out more about economic theories of value. The sum total of his knowledge on this score seems to be a statement in the **Encyclopedia Britannica** that “Value is defined by the economists as the measure of the force of desire.” (This same bit of erudition is trotted out in three different pamphlets. Apparently Scott didn’t even bother to look it up in a different encyclopedia.) Armed with this exhaustive survey of economic thought, he thereupon treats “value” and “price” as synonyms, scientifically makes a field trip to the grocery, where he notes that prices are variable, and



disposes of the whole alien business with the conclusion that obviously this economic set-up is not proceeding according to the established laws of thermodynamics, astrophysics and biological equilibrium.

Scott's treasured quotation from the **Britannica** represents the view of one school of capitalist economists, and has long since been exploded by Marxist criticism. The scientific socialist analysis of capitalism shows that the value which a commodity has in the process of exchange for other commodities depends on the amount of human *labor* which is necessary for its production. They exchange in corresponding proportions, and this fact sets the levels – the values – around which the day-to-day prices fluctuate, like the crests and troughs of waves around sea level. The very scientific technocrats dislike variables intensely but forget that altitude on this earth is measured from a "mean sea level," which actually exists only as a mathematical abstraction.

Scott summarizes: "Neither value, price, nor money may be measured *physically*" – that is, one can't put a ruler up against value and record the result on sensitized film – "and so science has relegated all three to their proper place along with the wails of the banshee." With this criterion, what a multitude of the scientific facts of life would be banished with the bansheest – including that imponderable, Scott's intelligence.

A Case of Scrambled Ergs

What do the technocrats propose to replace the idea of exchange value? They propose "energy costs."

This is the measurement of all the energy consumed in the production of any goods, as measured in calories, electrical ergs, kilowatts, etc. Thus the "energy cost" of a pair of shoes would be figured up by Scott's technologists by adding the amounts of various kinds of mechanical and electrical energy consumed by the stitching machines, cutting machines, water power, electric lights, steam locomotives transporting the materials, etc., involved in shoe manufacture – including very incidentally the calories of human energy consumed by the workers in the course of the whole process. This method is proposed because it is physically measurable and is therefore "scientific."

It is not necessary to go into all the absurdities of this fantastic proposal to see one glaring fact. The Marxist theory, which traces the source of the value of commodities to labor, has as its aim the *explanation* of *why* capitalist economy works the way it does and has the results it has. Through an understanding of the actual world, which is the world of capitalist society, it points the path to the abolition of the very conditions it is devoted to analyzing. Thus it provides that grasp of the social forces now at work which is necessary for the struggle of labor to take command of those social forces.

The technocrats do *not* put forwards their "energy cost" proposal as an explanation of the actual world. They do *not* claim that it sheds any light on what is happening in economy today. It is merely something that ought to be. When the laws of physics bring about the automatic collapse of the system the technocrats hold themselves ready to step forward and introduce the system of "energy costs," which because it can be physically measured, will enable them to plan production by keeping track of the ergs. As a bookkeeping device, it is part of the technocratic blueprint for the future.

The Technocrats present the change from reckoning price in money to reckoning wealth in "energy cost" as THE fundamental social reform which will eliminate its present evils; it is the essence of the change they propose. Each man equally is to be given "certificates" representing a certain amount of ergs, kilowatts, etc., and for these certificates he will receive goods whose production has consumed that amount of energy. Instead of being tagged in dollars and cents, goods in the technocratic distribution depots (stores) would be price-marked with a certain amount of ergs; and instead of handing dollars over the counter, the consumer would make the purchase with "energy certificates."

It is obvious that this "energy certificate" system is a system of *rationing*, just as the use of money in capitalist economy is – a system of rationing *scarcity*. But as soon as scarcity is eliminated, the use of any rationing device becomes an absurd superfluity. As soon as bread, for example, is produced by socialist industry in sufficient quantity to satisfy everyone's needs, it becomes unnecessary to *limit its distribution* either by energy certificates or any other form of money. As the level of production rises, freed of capitalism's stranglehold, this would apply to more and more of the necessities of life. The full flowering of the socialist production of abundance would tend to abolish the necessity for the use of money. But suppose television sets, flivver airplanes, diamond rings and hand-designed violins are not produced in sufficient quantity as yet to be distributed in this fashion? Then production and consumption in this sector of economy must still be limited.

The limitation on production will be determined, not only on the basis of how many ergs will have to be expended, but also on other factors: the availability of suitable machinery, raw materials, types of labor, etc. The adjustment of consumption demand to production will have to be effected by regulation of prices; the deliberate inflexibility of the technocratic "energy measurement" would only be an obstacle to such planning engineering. A hand-sewn dress made by a sedentary seamstress might take fewer ergs and calories for its production than a store dress made by giant machinery bursting with kilowatts, but that would not prevent women from passing up the dress of "high energy cost" for the "cheaper energy" dress. The technocratic notion of "energy cost" has no bearing upon an understanding of why the present system acts as it does; and as a proposal for the post-capitalist future it sounds more like a WPA project for unemployed statisticians than a realistic method of planning economy.

The "Price System"

The poverty of the technocrats' ideas on what makes the system tick does not, however, prevent them from speaking, in the grandiloquent terms of a megalomaniac, of their powers of analysis and prediction. The only laugh to be derived from the otherwise completely humorless writings of the technocrats is from their amazing braggadocio.

Any statement made by Technocracy, Inc., is a statement of fact, not theory. Technocracy's predictions are made with almost the same mathematical and scientific exactitude as astronomers' predictions of the next solar eclipse. (**Technocracy in Plain Terms**, page 14)

Actual concrete predictions by the technocrats are not plentiful, but those that have been put into writing are worth being set beside the above modest claim. In 1938 the official pamphlet, **The Mystery of Money**, made one of its



sure-fire predictions:

Scientific research, working with mathematical accuracy, has shown that the limits of tolerance beyond which the price system on the continent cannot much longer be maintained *will be reached around 1943*.

We shall see two other predictions later.

But while technocracy refuses to understand anything about the present system, it has a label for it – the “price system.” Its use of this term is misleading in two ways.

(1) The term “price system” has often been used (by Veblen, for example) as in effect a synonym for “capitalist system.” Not so the technocrats.

The term price system must not be confused with such terms as profit system, or capitalist system. The factor of ownership does not alter the mechanics of operating a price system. (**Mystery of Money**)

Remember, by the price system we do not mean capitalism. We mean the entire method of exchange and barter, wages and money. (**Technocracy in Plain Terms**)

Technocratic writers and speakers are instructed not to refer to “capitalist system” or “capitalists” at all. Technocratic literature never refers to “profits” any more than to “profit system.” This plays no rôle in their analysis of society.

(2) Their use of “price system” gives the impression that the term refers to some distinguishing characteristic of that system. This is not so. The technocrats make no distinctions in applying the term.

The present system, of course, is a price system. How about the feudalism of the Middle Ages? That was the price system too, says Scott. And ancient Egypt and the Roman Empire, which were based on chattel-slavery? Price systems all. Socialist or communist society? Price systems, says Scott.

In fact, according to the astronomically-accurate analysis of technocracy, everything past, present or proposed is the price system – except technocracy – *whether or not* such system depended on a money economy, or were based on the exchange of products, or existed with or without money, or even with or without prices.

It is no wonder that technocracy can explain nothing. For how *could* it explain phenomena *peculiar* to capitalism – like periodic industrial crises – on the basis of a criticism of an unchanging system which has presumably existed since the dawn of history?

In point of fact, they distinguish technocracy from the “price system” in that, under technocracy, it is proposed that goods be distributed equally, rather than sold. This is the kernel of the technocratic theory which has impressed some people as an approach to socialism. This view has it that technocracy “has its points”: something like a Texas steer – a point here and a point there, and a lot of bull in between. Is there a socialist point to it?

In the first place, we shall see that the *theory* of the technocrats is not the significant thing about them – any more than Hitler’s “national socialist” theory was the indicative thing about his movement.

The rôle of their theory is the same as it was in the case of Hitler. As the **New York Post** put it (approvingly) on December 31, 1932:

It [Technocracy] leaves them offering mathematical formula: and a semblance of realism about the machine civilization in which we live, without the ugly necessity of handing over that civilization to the uncouth working class.

Technocracy points vaguely to some kind of planned society where wealth is distributed. Hitler’s demagoguery was more concrete.

But in any case, even on the face of it, a closer look at the “new order” which the technocrats propose shows that it is not socialism or a reasonable facsimile thereof. It is fascism.

Footnotes

Cf. “The destroyer of trade unions is *not the employer* but such men as Benjamin Franklin, Faraday and the electrical wizard, Steinmetz. They displaced brawn by brains.” (**The Mystery of Money**, an official pamphlet) Now the NAM can push its anti-labor drive with the full sanction of science and Scott.

“Scott tells us that a razor blade with a tungsten carbide edge, fabricated with only a twenty per cent increase in energy, would last for a generation.” writes Chase. But the only moral he draws is the wideness of the horizon of technology.

Speaking of ignorance, the pamphlet, **The Mystery of Money**, refers to Major Douglas, the social-credit exponent, as the “follower of Marx” who “amplifies the Marxian theories of unearned increment”! The writer is obviously dealing with a subject “alien to his world of thought.”

The Technocrats are on principle opposed to participating in debates or discussions with proponents of opposing viewpoints. Their official reason is: “You can’t argue with facts. All we present are facts.”

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Immutable Proof Why Marxists Hate Technocracy – Part I

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